

CANADIAN ART

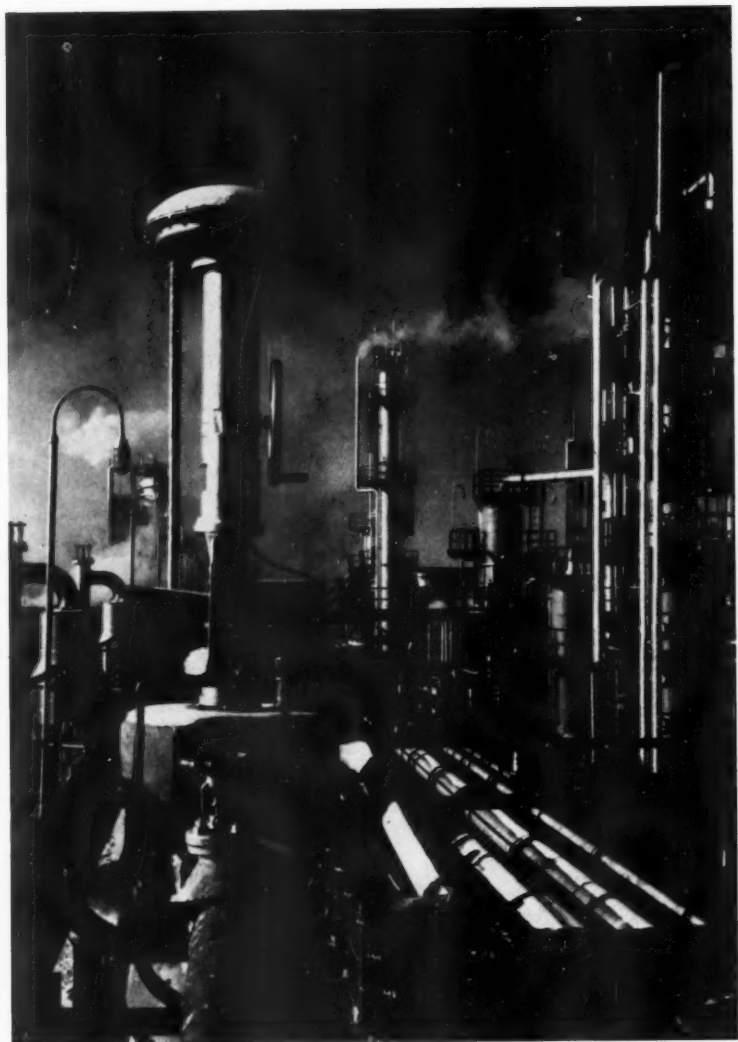


OTTAWA

VOL. XIII NO. 4

SUMMER 1956

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IMPERIAL OIL LIMITED

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This linnet, *Bird in Grasses*, by Bruno Bobak won an honourable mention in the Fourth International Exhibition of Drawings and Engravings at Lugano, Switzerland, this summer. Eighth prize in the same exhibition was awarded to Kazuo Nakamura for his drawing, *Four Bridges*

CANADIAN ART

Summer Number

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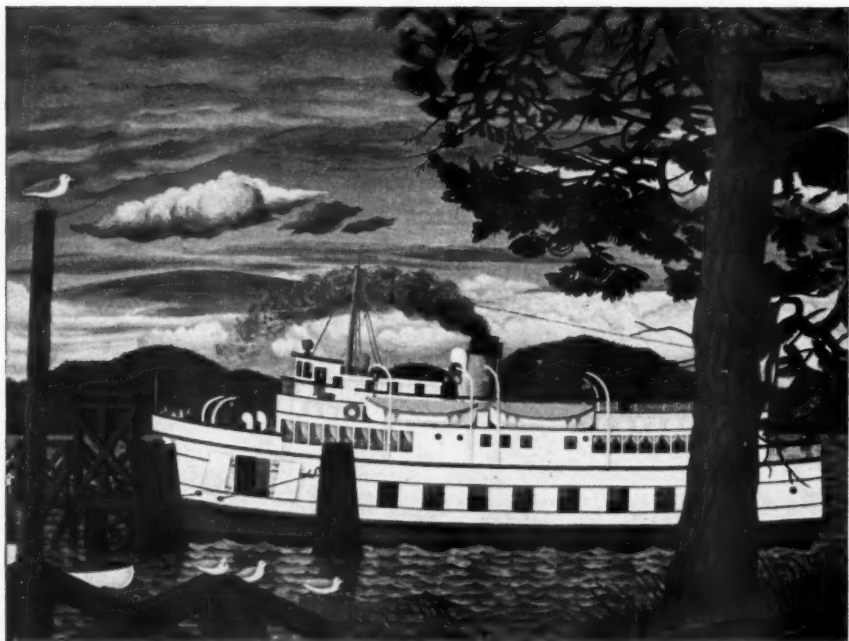
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Decorative Arts of Europe, the Americas and Asia

1379 Sherbrooke Street West

Montreal, P.Q.



E. J. HUGHES. *Car Ferry at Sidney, B.C.* The National Gallery of Canada

My Impressions When Viewing Nature

The particular scene in this painting is one I chose during a series of sketching trips on Vancouver Island in the summers of 1947 and 1948. The original sketch was drawn in pencil, with colours written in, at Sidney on the Saanich Peninsula not far from Victoria, during a week I spent there . . . The white ferry, with repeated windows, and the sky, Gulf Island hills, the sea and the movement caused by breezes are some of the elements that combined to make this scene as I sketched it. I later (in 1952) tried to put it down on canvas as I saw and felt it. The painting was done almost direct with very little changing from the arrangement in the original sketch. The seagulls and people were really there but the small boat on the left was added later and the tree moved a little to the right.

This ferry, "Motor Princess", plied between Sidney and the mainland near Vancouver. It is now being dismantled and rebuilt for a shorter run among the Gulf Islands.

My approach to landscape painting in general, as in this painting, is one of attempting to put on canvas, in oil medium, as closely as possible, my impressions when viewing nature or remembering it.

E. J. HUGHES

Joe Plaskett — An Ode to a Room

DORIS SHADBOLT

PAINTINGS, like people, assert themselves in different ways: a Picasso is as likely as not to send us sprawling; a Matisse so to seduce our eyes that we have a total sense of well-being; Rouault looks deeply and intently into our very souls, and we thrill and tremble. A Joe Plaskett calls to us in a silvery but insistent voice, preferably if we are alone and in a quiet mood, and when we listen he leads us to a realm of such stillness that time and the external world cease to exist.

Recently he had two exhibitions of his work, one in New Westminster (which he shared with Jack Hardman, another local artist) and one at the New Design Gallery in West Vancouver. I wish I could suggest how moving the experience of visiting these exhibitions was and create for you a mood, for he is a romantic artist and will not yield to the hard-headed viewer.

You must imagine yourself going from room to room hung with canvases of average size and average shape, all quiet pictures. Their colour shows considerable variety and warmth, yet a general impression of gleaming cool blue-green-greys persists. I think "gleaming" is the word, for his colour has a primary value as light has; in fact, light seems to be the substance of which these "dreams" are made, a kind of early, dusty twilight from which the warmth has not yet faded. Sometimes it is quite literally the atmosphere he paints, by filling a space with quiet radiance and causing an object, almost incidentally, to shimmer. I believe, once before, I wrote of his use of light as an elemental, life-giving force.

Though handled with energy and brilliance, the paint itself is usually thin, at times almost a wash, and when you find a touch of impasto, as in the flash of a chandelier crystal, it has the value of light rather than of substance. You stop at a painting: it is of a sculptured bust of Condorcet (the eighteenth-century philosopher) on a mantel in front of a large mirror; the shadowed head and shoulders in the other corner belong to the artist, whose

image and that of the pale shattered glory which is a hanging chandelier are reflected by a second mirror back and forth until one can almost hear the echo reverberating in time. Here, next, is his painting of a nineteenth-century portrait by Rigaud, and here a second painting of the first painting, plus the Rigaud, and then a third painting, and so on—and by now you feel silenced and awed in the still centre of the slowly whirling pool of time. In another canvas, alive with shadowed light, is a rococo clock on the mantel, its curves picked up by the autumn leaves beside it. Even in a horizontal canvas like this the movements are predominantly vertical as though for this artist light and atmosphere irresistibly aspire upwards. And here sits a girl, her gaze unfocussed, her form transfigured by the light which floods in the balcony window. There are other figure paintings too, not commissioned portraits, but studies of his friends and acquaintances, and of himself. Some have a compelling withdrawn quality, as though the creatures within had retreated and were watching us from behind their human shells; in others, the individuality of the figure becomes inseparable from the individuality of the whole picture, "a part of all that he has met". Here is an upright piano which one senses has seen a lot of use. Now the chandelier again and yet again; and the clock, and the mirrored mirrors, and the bust.

Yes, they are quiet pictures, with a deeply reflective mood. But the quiet is not a comfortable, purring quiet, as in Vuillard, but the quiet of those still moments when time and place cease to have any concrete value and we sense ourselves on the brink of revelation. And in this state, these objects, the chandelier, the bust, the figure, through contemplation, appear to become the agents by which the revelation is accomplished.

All these pictures, in fact, were painted in one room, about one room, by a person under the spell of the room. It is the room which Joe Plaskett "found" in Paris when he made



JOE PLASKETT

Above:
Through a Glass Lightly

Right:
A Shade of Condorcet

his first trip to Europe in 1948, to which he returned on his second sojourn, and in which he lived and painted during some three winter seasons. It is in an old house, built about a hundred years ago, number 119, Boulevard Saint-Germain. The room itself is large, spacious and high-ceilinged, furnished, perhaps populated is a better word, with these now familiar objects which, if not antiques, at least were inspired by times other than our own. So enchanted has he been that he has written an eight-page "Ode to the Room":

" The future and the past are looking at you here.
Can you not feel their eyes upon you? And there are ears listening too.
These mirrors are all ears: do not drop words lightly here
Nor heavily either; all should be in a whisper.
Mirrors cannot shout
And the ears behind them are not hard of hearing.
I shall tell you whose eyes and ears those are presently
But while I am telling I want you to listen and look as I have listened and looked.
This (the room) can take an infinity of listening and looking.
If you will stay as many hours and evenings as I have with your ear to its ears, your eye to its eyes,
You will be no nearer to it.
It remains as inaccessible as a god,
As many-faceted as the world, as multicellular as man."

For Plaskett it was not simply the glamour of an old or a foreign setting, for he could not be a tourist if he tried, nor was it the glamour of the past as an escape from the





JOE PLASKETT. *The Mantelpiece*

present. It was the rich accumulation of human meanings: this bust, made by other hands, a personal object, possessed, handled, viewed by other persons; this space, more meaningful because haunted by the ghosts of all those who had sat, dined or conversed in it, and to which he now added his own presence; the poetry of these mirrors telescoping time, his present, the room's past, into one silvered image. One recalls how ancient Chinese paintings gained in value and meaning as each successive owner or distinguished viewer added his approval in the form of a seal, or a line of poetry; such paintings were transformed

by the layers of human attachment through which they were seen. So I think it was with this room.

One cannot speak of Plaskett, the painter, without speaking a little of Plaskett, the man, for his is an art which is penetrated most fully by his particular approach to life. He is a highly literate person. His perception of the quality of things is extraordinarily refined, but this by nature rather than by cultivation. He is one of the few people I know who do not view things moralistically; his view encompasses evil innocently, so that he feels no shock, no need to comment. This leaves him



JOE PLASKETT
The Poetess



JOE PLASKETT

*Le Peintre émerveillé
devant le monde*

*The National Gallery
of Canada*

free to respond to the innate qualities of most things he encounters. Other people have visited the room which he paints with such sympathy and understanding; they report it to be dingy and drab. Others have known some of the people he found and made legendary; they report them to be pleasant but ordinary. It is not to the external values, it is to the inner quiet spirit of places and people that Plaskett intuitively goes. And there he takes us with him in his paintings.

He grew up in the pleasant small-town atmosphere of New Westminster, the son of gentle and sympathetic people, his father a canon in the Anglican Church (now retired but still active and much loved in his community), his mother a quiet and twinkling-eyed English woman. As a boy he liked to draw and paint and he still has some of his early water colours which have a clarity and intensity similar to Japanese prints. After his graduation from the University of British Columbia, from which he was to move to a teaching career, he began taking some night classes at the Vancouver School of Art, and

this marks the beginning of his serious interest in art. In 1946 he was awarded the first Emily Carr scholarship and went to the United States to study, first at the San Francisco School of Art (then under the direction of Douglas Macagy) and afterwards in New York with Hans Hofmann. There are some abstract canvases, done at this time or on his return to Canada, which show a solid grasp of picture structure and "paint-talk", and which are anything but empty exercises, even though it was always apparent that for him art must be emotionally connected with the representational world. In 1947 he accepted a year's appointment as director of the Winnipeg School of Art where he obviously had a stimulating and liberating influence on artists such as James Willer and Takao Tanabe.

The following year he made his first visit to Europe where from the first he found himself much at home. For two winters he painted in the "room" in Paris, or in London, spending the summers as an itinerant, and on these travels preserving the peculiar insight of his vision in the prolific number of pastels he

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did. These are executed with a light and elegant summary touch, catching with sharp nostalgia the magic moment when a place appears to reveal its characteristic nature. I recall someone once remarking on the unique combination of high artistic quality and salability in these pastels. His *Self in Camden Town* in the collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery was painted in London and belongs to and is typical of this period. The shadowed image of a young man (the artist) reflected in the large mirror, together with some of the paraphernalia of the room, with a flood of smashing white-yellow-green light surging in from the top and back of the picture. The painting strokes are very direct and forceful, and the pigmentation heavier than in the more recent canvases, but there is already the quality of reminiscence, reflection and of time suspended so that the past, the present and the future can merge. An expressive impressionism is perhaps how one can best describe the oils of this period which were shown at a large one-man exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1952.

In the spring of 1954 he was awarded a Canadian Government scholarship and once again headed for Europe where he stayed,

with headquarters in Paris, until this past Christmas. It is of the work done during this last interval that I have written at greater length for I believe it represents a summation of the direction in which he has been developing for some time.

What next? Can he swallow our crude raw liquor after having sipped the aromatic aged vintages of Paris? What will take the place of the "room", which for a time so happily seemed to constitute the reducing glass through which the world could be imaged and grasped by his poetic vision? The truth is, of course, that the glass is, and always was, within himself. And he has had the good fortune to have already discovered this. He will continue to paint wherever human beings have left their imprint of thought, yearning or love. As he says himself: "What is art always about? Its subject is man. Even if a landscape it is man inhabited or seen in relation to the scale of man, or as a refuge for the escaping man. A non-humanist landscape is unthinkable. A still life is the thing man eats, or eats from. And finally is there a subject more worthy of an artist's investigation than a human face, or a form more exciting or ennobling to the human imagination than the human form?"

JOE PLASKETT. *Place de la Concorde. Drawing*



Canadian Artists Abroad — An Exhibition

CLARE BICE

ANY creative artist develops and matures as the years go by. His technique changes to convey his enlarging ideas in more expressive terms. But to what extent does he consciously control the direction his art takes? What influences, in his personal experience, in his circle of friends, in his visual surroundings, alter his creative impulses,—dry them up, release them in a surge of eloquence, turn them to poetic romancing or to bitter commentary? If a painter lives in Vancouver, how different will his canvases be from those he might have produced in Moose Jaw or Montreal? If he has to spend five days a week in a commercial studio will he be able to forget the superficial tricks of his trade on those week-ends when he is free to paint as he chooses? If the five days are spent giving out his ideas in a classroom, will he have enough fire left in him to create his own canvases on Saturday and Sunday?

How would such an artist be affected by six months in Mexico or a year in Paris? Better still, if he were largely freed from economic anxiety by the good fortune of a fellowship, would he be encouraged to launch out into purely constructive experiments which might

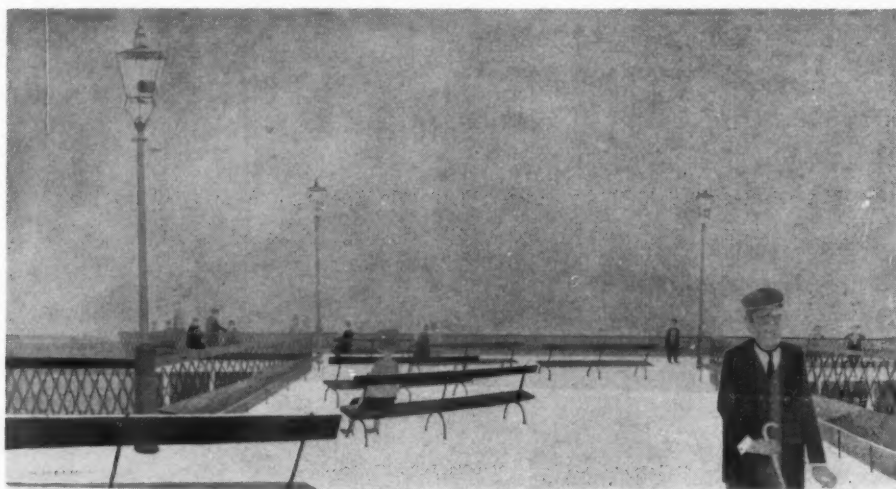
affect his painting for the rest of his life?

It was questions such as these which prompted me to organize the exhibition "Canadian Artists Abroad". This opened in the Art Gallery and Museum, London, Ontario, this March and is now travelling to other Canadian cities under the auspices of the National Gallery of Canada.

The exhibition comprises 67 paintings by 17 Canadian artists who have recently spent some time in Mexico, France, England and Brazil. Included are such well-known painters as R. York Wilson, Jack Humphrey and Goodridge Roberts, as well as the younger painters, James Willer, William Roberts and Alex Millar. In most cases, one canvas is in the artist's earlier style while three recent ones disclose any change which may have taken place in his approach and manner since his sojourn abroad. An exception is Alfred Pellán whose four canvases cover more than thirty years from 1923 until the present. This is because Pellán has spent so much of that period in Paris.*

**Pellán is now back in Canada after having been honoured with a one-man exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris in 1955.*

WILLIAM ROBERTS. *On the Pier at Noon*



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GOODRIDGE
ROBERTS

Interior



It would be idle to anticipate a sweeping change in direction in the paintings shown. Beyond a general drift into abstraction, the changes are varied and are the result of personal reassessments and discoveries. It is possible to observe the effects of Mexican sunshine and white walls in the colour and shapes to be found in the paintings of Wilson, Brooks and Millar. One might detect traces of the influence of English intellect and order in the work of James A. S. MacDonald and William

Roberts. It is not difficult to call up the secular vitality and exuberance of the modern French masters when we examine the recent canvases of Pellán, Biéler and Humphrey.

Goodridge Roberts, as might be expected, remains totally unaffected by the months he spent in France and Italy. He considers the opportunity he had there of seeing Italian frescoes to have been a major experience; beyond that, his time abroad only made him more acutely aware of his strong emotional



LEONARD BROOKS

*Rocky Coast,
Mazanillo*

ties with the Canadian landscape. Roberts is too deeply entrenched in his own individuality to alter course easily. With Jacques de Tonnancour also, it was not the year he spent in Brazil which colours and shapes his subsequent work. It is rather a personal quest for a path forward. Even an artist such as Roloff Beny, who feels a restless urge to search for new impressions and new truths in the changing atmosphere of travel, knows that his Canadian background leaves its mark on his work. "There is no reason, or much proof, to suggest that the artist who remains at home and looks from a one-point perspective within and without, won't be as well rewarded as his brother who pushes beyond the threshold of the familiar to peer from foreign soil at the same stars. I do know that, wherever I go, I carry the image of singing space that my prairie birth has given me, and it is a good foundation."

The alterations in R. York Wilson's work between 1946 and 1955 are even and progressive, while in Jack Humphrey's painting the opportunity to experiment freely, which was offered him through the fellowship he held in France in 1953-54, has sent him to explore non-objective patterns from which to find a new world in which he may set up his personal realm of expression.

The artists were asked to note in words any influence which may have affected the direction of their work, influences to be found in new and different surroundings, in the culture or the contemporary art of another country. The answers are interesting. Almost to a man, they have disavowed that the contemporary art of their hosts has had any direct influence on them. This reluctance to admit being easily persuaded by the current painting of London, Paris or Mexico is understandable. No one likes to feel that they have been blown about by chance impressions.

York Wilson put it this way: "The changes that have occurred in my painting while abroad are the result of being exposed to subject matter more applicable to pre-conceived painting ideas. Mexico and Morocco were responsible for a new conception of form and a complete change in colour thinking. During 1953-54 in Mexico my painting philosophy changed or, more correctly, an expansion of consciousness took place, through association with Rico Lebrun."

While Joe Plaskett expresses respect for two contemporary European painters of originality and force, Giacometti and Francis Bacon, he adds that he turned more and more for inspiration to painters of the older schools, Turner, Corot, Vuillard and others. He re-

ANDRÉ BIÉLER

Tout en cherchant

sponded in Europe to the pervading sense of the past, to a beauty composed of antiquity, history and art.

"I had a passion to record the imperilled monuments of the past, similar perhaps to the passion which drove the Romantics (Canaletto, Piranesi, Turner) to travel and to record what they saw. My nature is intensely romantic, so that my abstract work had always been difficult and against the grain. Abstraction deals with the general and I had become fascinated by the particular.

"I found the particular in the room I lived in in Paris. This room is a microcosm of Europe. It has influenced my paintings far more strongly than any painter or place. It is a period room (Louis XV) whose crystal chandelier, mirrors and furnishings became my almost obsessive theme. In it I pursued a sort of *recherche du temps perdu* in paint, my colours became muted, my forms delicate and evanescent. I was in a sense living in the past, where reality became a sort of echo."

A change from contemporary abstraction to a fascination with the sense of the past, here indeed is an unusual change in direction!

At the other extreme is the colourful non-objectivism of Fernand Leduc, also the work of Takao Tanabe, who explores mystic abstract

landscapes. Tanabe is concerned about a provincialism in painting on the prairies (and elsewhere) based on one of the dangers of our "magazine-diffusion" culture, the danger of seeing only reproductions of large paintings reduced to a fraction of their actual size, with textures and paint configuration flattened to the slick surface of coated papers.

For the younger painters a period in new surroundings meant a broadening of experience and a chance to relate their Canadian background and Canadian styles of painting to those found in a society built upon the sad, glad ruins and rich ashes of an old culture.

For William Roberts: "A visit to France and Spain painting and sketching all the time does something that an art school cannot hope to do. An art school can prepare you for the trip, which is important. I think every artist who is serious about his work must travel and see for himself what the rest of the world is doing, not once in his life but from time to time."

Says James S. H. Willer: "I cannot for the life of me (search continent, country or man) name a single source of influence, at least nothing beyond the pattern of a passing raincoat or a rotting door. Yet coming to Europe

Continued on page 347



Maxwell Bates, Dramatist

ILLINGWORTH KERR

MAXWELL BATES

The Railway Worker

Chinese brush drawing

DRAMA implies conflict, psychological and spiritual. Such tensions mark the paintings of Maxwell Bates, the Calgary artist. Without any literary or theatrical aim, he produces drama through his desire to enrich a visual experience.

His stated aim is "to reconcile disparate forms with one another, to unify chaotic elements; this to heighten the psychological impact and gain content. No use, he adds, "to try to unify that which has no conflict."

Physically, Bates being short appears broad and rugged. But his ruggedness is not athletic; it lies behind the set of his mouth, and broad bushy brows. His wit and engaging grin are reserved for special occasions; he can be glum and distant, abrupt, even repelling. He has little time for the trivial, but he delights in whimsy—the juxtaposition of his "disparate elements". This sense of whimsy is revealed in his graphic art and his painting, where it affects his treatment of line and surface, yet it is never wilful or an end in itself; it always covers a deeper preoccupation.

Bates is a romantic and a mystic. He is also

practical to the extent that he is a successful architect, but his interest there is essentially aesthetic.

His formative years were fortunate. His father, an architect before him, subscribed to *The Studio* and from his earliest years he studied and copied Rembrandt, Daumier, Forain, and later Goya and Degas. Rare company compared to the usual type of calendar art to be found in prairie homes. His earliest original creations were of armoured knights and castles, which he now sees as having been fortified retreats from an incomprehensible world, chaotic and violent. He also recollects as a child frightening birds from lawns to make them wary of dangers such as cats and people. He became a "chronic writer of poetry".

An interest in the strange, the foreign, the bizarre, led him at an early age to Russian novels and to the reading of philosophy and psychology. Reflections of this crop up in his painting today. Women observed at coffee counters downtown or children at play take on an other-worldly dimension. It is intimate observation, but impersonal. He is bold but

cautious; still building forts, still concerned for the safety of the birds.

After high school he became associated with his father in architecture, though his real passion was for painting. The idea of nationalism in Canadian art did not affect him. Self-taught, except for two years in evening classes, he became influenced by Gauguin, van Gogh and Cézanne. When his work was shown in Calgary in 1928 it shocked the local artists, public and press. Though he exhibited in Vancouver, Ottawa and New York, the home town remained unimpressed.

His chief sustaining force was a fellow painter, Roy Stevenson, with whom Bates made a stimulating visit to the Chicago Art Institute. In 1931 he went by cattle boat to England, where in London he managed to live for a few years quite unhandsomely on the sale of his work, without resorting to pot-boilers. However, from 1934 until the war he found employment as an architect. In this period his painting received recognition in London through membership in the "Twenties Group", in a one-man showing at the Wertheim

Gallery and in group exhibitions at the Storrans and the Redfern galleries.

In the defence of the Dunkirk beachhead, Bates was captured and he became a prisoner of war in Germany for five years. On a labour gang at a German salt mine he loaded salt, coal, sand and "anything that was heavy". But those days are buried; Bates does not dramatize himself. From the guards he obtained drawing pencils and on rough paper used for lining salt cars he made studies of prisoners of many nationalities. His concern was people, not the external evidence but the internal reality of war.

Later some of these drawings, abetted by an edged memory, gave rise to paintings. But Bates is neither a Goya nor a Picasso; his work is not social propaganda. His canvases more than hint at satire, even bitterness, yet in the nine years that I have known him he has sidestepped such questions as, "Why paint a mad woman?", "Why is the poet so distraught?", "Do you mean that this has no political significance?", with such answers as, "I didn't think of it that way" or "It must be there since you

MAXWELL BATES
Family Group



mention it." With a horror of story-telling and sentimentality he concedes only that the literary aspect of his work may be a kind of by-product.

Certainly Bates is no socialist; his indignation is against individual blindness and the more unconscious cruelties of man. His is the subconscious awareness of a liberal mind which is bent on seeking spiritual values by aesthetic means.

The impersonal approach, plus a preoccupation with colour, sometimes causes a disconcerting placing of emphasis. Bonnard and Vuillard are examples of artists who could subordinate a figure to a teapot or a carpet. When Bates lets his emphasis wander to secondary elements his success varies according to the degree of realism with which he treats his subject. His figures seem to insist on having a certain symbolism even when the painter wishes to treat them only as formal elements.

Bates is a colourist. Yet having little use for colour theory, he relies on a sensory response

which heightens the individuality of his work. The strangeness and surprise of his colours is almost unfailing in canvas after canvas, large and small. As a result, one often wishes that his work was more completely abstract. At times he gratifies this wish and at times his subject almost disintegrates in colour until recognition of it becomes no more than a diversion, a relaxing pause in his drama of colour.

The treatment of his surface varies with the nature of the discovery that lies beneath. His oils range from a simple impasto to rich, broken pigment. In his water colours, his washes may remain flat or be built up with overlays and body colour to an intense pitch. Often they are vibrant with ink lines drawn on a damp ground, and sometimes they have a base of printer's ink or of pastel.

When he was in New York in 1949 the buildings of that city interested him as much as had those of Europe. His architect's eye retains the image of a building as clearly as a



MAXWELL BATES

Still Life

*The National Gallery
of Canada*

horse-trader pictures an individual nag. And he works equally well from memory doing landscape and figures. *Draw from the model but create from memory* is a credo which sets him free.

Painters like Cézanne are compelled by the actual form; others are compelled by the visual image. Bates drew wholly on his imagination

we good fellows who know our farmers well protest, "But they are not like that! Our farmers are not peasants!" Of course not. For are we not all free, truly free, in this country? Are we not?

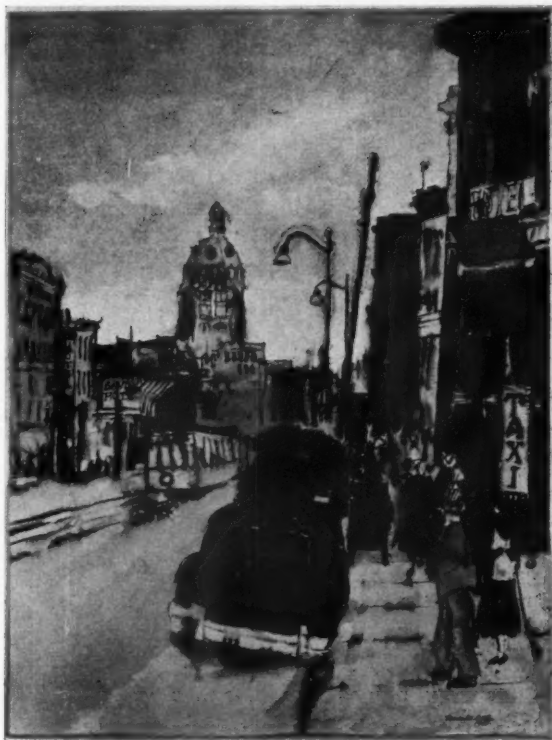
Still Bates insists he is no propagandist.

Which recalls the insane woman. "Oh, no. Not insane as such," says Bates. "That's no

MAXWELL BATES

Hastings Street, Vancouver

Water colour



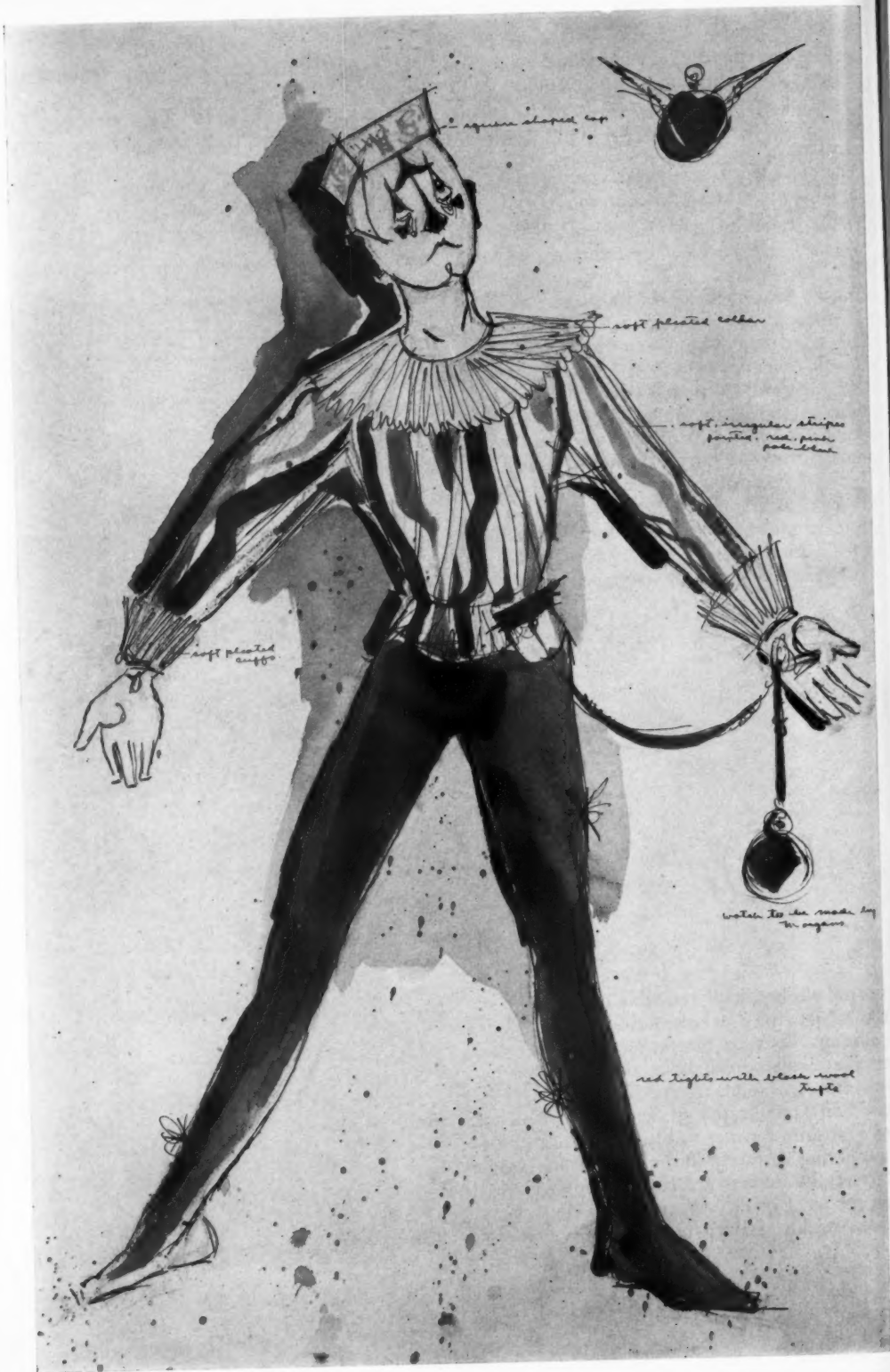
for the pitcher, fruit and table top which form the subject of a whole series of his still-life paintings. So with the people in his canvases; they are not copied from sketches on a pad but are seen suddenly by him as part of an emotion "recollected in tranquility". Groups of Hutterite farmers in black or neutral garbs wandering austerely in the city, or any of the farmers he depicts are hardly known to him except by a quality of empathy. He presents them starkly, staring out at infinity. And all

subject for a painter, really. Just a certain intensity!"

"A person possessed?"

"Yes, yes, that's it."

Perhaps this is as close as we can come to the mystic element that charges Bates' work, whether landscape, still life, figure or abstraction. All are to a degree possessed. Possessed by their own inner spirit, invested with associations, overtones of other times or even other existences.



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Artists Design for Ballet

IRENE KON

JEAN FOURNIER DE BELLEVAL

Costume for J'ai tant dansé

Opposite page: RONALD GORDON

Costume for Pantomime



COLLABORATION between artists and producers helped to make the opening performances this May of the recently organized Montreal Theatre Ballet an exciting event. Five new ballets were presented and five designers participated.

The first ballet was *Mirages*. Set by choreographer Brian Macdonald to Claude Champagne's "Piano Concerto", it presented the sixteen dancers of the company in a modern abstract dance of carefully worked out rhythmic patterns and swift movements on to and off and about the stage. The simple but effective costumes were by Raoul-Jean Fouré, an internationally known dress designer and president of the Canadian Couturier Association. Based on the leotards and tights that give to dancers the greatest freedom of movement and comfort, the costumes by Fouré make use of short, but extremely graceful, draperies of chiffon in floating panels of colour that helped the dancers melt and blend most effectively with the patterns of the dance. The tights and leotards were of medium

grey, the draperies of rich rusts, browns and burgundy, lime yellows and greens.

Ronald Gordon, display director of Henry Morgan Co. Ltd., received a most enthusiastic reception for his stage setting and costumes for *Pantomime*. Set to music by Pierre Mercure, this ballet by Joey Harris is short, but intense in feeling, and it gave Gordon an excellent opportunity of displaying his sense of theatre. He ingeniously made the small cast of dancers represent the noise, the freaks, the animals, the bustle and, above all, the excitement of a circus. Papier mâché masks gave the three-headed lady and the elephant real character without affecting their ability to see and to dance. Cellophane, sequins, red and gold braid all served Gordon's purpose in creating that mood of tragedy and laughter which is the circus. His comprehensive colour sketches were displayed at the same time in the lobby of the theatre.

Jean Fournier de Belleval designed the sets and costumes for Elizabeth Leese's free interpretation of the nine songs of Michele Perrault's "Canadian Folk Sketches." De

Bellevall is known for his work in *Ti Coq* and has costumed a number of Miss Leese's ballets including *Lady from the Sea*. An architect by profession, de Bellevall is a great balletomane, has danced himself, and claims that one of the first responsibilities of a costume designer is to see that the dancers are comfortable and that the costumes reveal the movements, the grace and the meaning of the dance. For the Montreal Theatre Ballet performance of *J'ai tant dansé* he dressed both boys and girls in corduroy in deep, rich tones which caught the light beautifully. These were modern interpretations of authentic old French Canadian costumes. Nylon tulle in clear, light colours petticoated the girls' full skirts and trimmed the boys' jackets to give a light, fresh quality to both costumes and dances.

Gilles Vaillancourt is a costume designer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and did a fine job of dressing dancers Christina Coleman and Joey Harris for Harris' own *Pas de Deux*. A gentle satire on all classical ballet, and of great ballerinas in particular, it was done with verve and wit to a delightful score by Montreal composer Hugh Davidson. Harris wore grey tights and jacket with elaborate epaulets of red braid. Miss Coleman wore the shortest, crispest and whitest of tutus, with a brilliant diamond tiara crowning her classical coiffure. A bright red sash which swept from shoulder to hip set off the costume.

The closing number was *Postscript*, a jazz ballet by Brian Macdonald, set to an original score by Arthur Morrow. Based on the backstage goings-on after a performance, when the dancers are reviewing their mistakes and successes, and generally unwinding after the tensions of a performance, this ballet set a simple yet complex challenge to the designers. It was required that the dancers be dressed in a variety of practice clothes, as well as in street clothes; a strange assortment of sweaters, tights, skirts, blue jeans and so forth in which dancers habitually attire themselves for their strenuous life. To make this assortment look authentic without creating a confusion of line and colour on the stage was the task assigned to the Fashion Arts Academy of Montreal. Seven of their students pooled their talents to give the leading dancers enough individuality

and character to delineate their special roles and yet keep a harmonizing unity when the entire company danced together.

The lighting for all the ballets was done by Ken Withers, who worked in close collaboration with the designers. In spite of the difficulties of effectively lighting five ballets, all entirely different in mood and feeling, within a fairly small budget and with a shortage of good equipment, the cyclorama and general lighting was excellent.

To mount and present five new ballets is an enormous undertaking, both artistically and financially, for even an established ballet company. That the Montreal Theatre Ballet was able to succeed as well as it did in the short time allotted, a matter of six or eight weeks, is indeed an achievement. The enthusiastic, if not large, audiences which attended the performances, demonstrated their admiration vocally, and the press reviews endorsed this opinion.

The movement to organize this company was led by Brian Macdonald, its artistic director, and he had the able and competent help of producer Ken Withers of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Macdonald, a dancer himself, a teacher and choreographer, wanted a company in which all related artists, dancers and choreographers, composers and musicians, librettists and designers, could work together to express their native environment. The emergence of such companies, whether they be ballet, musical comedy, or straight theatre, create exciting opportunities for Canadian artists in every field. Such companies will also help meet the ever growing demands of television for new talent.

The financing of such projects, however, poses a real problem. The Montreal Theatre Ballet ended up with a deficit this season. It is organizing a campaign for increased support and it counts on, and hopes for, a large membership. Exhilarating proof of the amity and co-operation that can exist between the various art groups in Canada is evident in the generous gesture made by five well-known Montreal painters, Dr. Arthur Lismer, Stanley Cosgrove, Goodridge Roberts, Robert LaPalme and Ghitta Caiserman, who donated paintings to be sold to help finance this company.

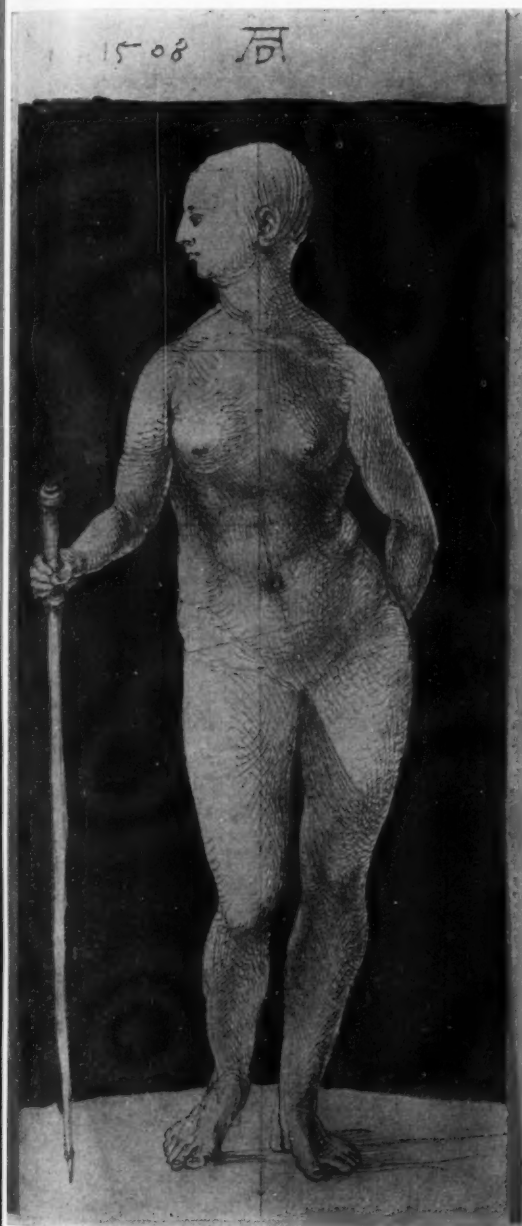
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ALBRECHT DÜRER. *A Nude Woman with a Staff*
Pen and brown ink drawing with wash background
The National Gallery of Canada

A Gift of a Notable Dürer

A drawing of *A Nude Woman with a Staff* by Albrecht Dürer has been presented to the National Gallery of Canada by Joseph H. Hirshhorn and a group of his friends and associates.

One of a small group of Dürer drawings formerly belonging to Prince Lubomirski of Poland, it is one of the most notable additions ever made to the Gallery's growing collection of old master drawings. It is also the first Dürer drawing to enter a Canadian museum. One of his well known figure studies, it is related to the most famous of all his engravings, the *Adam and Eve* of 1504. Although dated 1508, it was apparently made before the engraving, probably in 1503, and it has been suggested with some reason that Dürer often dated his drawings from memory some time after the period in which they were made.

The eminence of Dürer, who stands with Leonardo and Michelangelo as one of the greatest artists of the Renaissance, has always been recognized. He travelled widely in Italy and the Netherlands and it was chiefly through his drawings, engravings and woodcuts that he enjoyed the international reputation he had in his own day and which he still holds in ours. Through Dürer, more than any other single artist, Germany attained her high position in the world of art in the fifteenth century; his graphic art travelled to all parts of that world and its influence did much to bring the liberating ideas of the Italian Renaissance north of the Alps and eventually to spread them across Europe.

In his drawings Dürer recorded and explored every aspect of man and nature and probed every theory of art; it is in these drawings that the vast scope of his genius is revealed. But although the National Gallery has owned for several years many fine examples of Dürer's engravings and woodcuts, it has had no example of his drawings. The one which it has now been given is one of the numerous figure studies, based on geometrical principles of perfection of proportion and balance, which Dürer made during his life-long search for the ideal of human beauty. In it he shows the extraordinary powers of his draughtsmanship in setting down with a few quick sensitive strokes of the pen the subtle forms and contours of the human body. And in his feeling for the space and atmosphere in which a figure moves, he leaves the mediaeval world behind him and links himself with the new.

KATHLEEN M. FENWICK



HANS MEMLING

Portrait of a Young Man

*The Montreal Museum
of Fine Arts*

PIETER BRUEGHEL
THE YOUNGER

*The Sacrifice
of Isaac*

*The Montreal Museum
of Fine Arts*



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Montreal Acquires a Memling and a Brueghel

HITHERTO, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has possessed no paintings of the Northern European Schools before the seventeenth century, except a much repainted *Descent from the Cross* attributed to the anonymous Master of the Female Half-Lengths, but two recent acquisitions of great importance now go far towards removing this reproach.

The first of these in date is the *Portrait of a Young Man* by Hans Memling, of about 1475, which the museum has just purchased out of the Townsend and Cheney Funds. The sitter wears a black cap and doublet and is seen against a wooded background with water on which two swans are floating; the sky is of a marvellous and resonant blue.

The painting was formerly in the famous J. E. Taylor collection in England, and was sold in London at Christies in July 1912. Then it was in the Bohler collection in Munich, from which it passed to the collection of John H. Willys in Toledo, Ohio.

Friedländer in the Memling volume of his *Die Altniederländische Malerei*, 1928, described it as much rubbed (*stark verrieben*). On the other hand, Valentiner, in his catalogue of the art exhibition at the New York World's Fair in 1939, describes it as being in a fine state of preservation. This, of course, argued that the painting had been restored after 1928.

In view of this, we could not have considered its purchase without a thorough examination of its condition. The Metropolitan Museum most generously put the services of its research department at our disposal, which allowed examination by x-ray, infra-red, ultra-violet, microscope and raking-light. (None of these processes by itself reveals the whole story, but together they provide a complete corpus of evidence leaving no room for doubt.)

Our conclusions were unanimous. The sky and landscape, the hand, the doublet and the cap are in their original condition, absolutely untouched except for a small area in the sky about the size of a nickel which has been repainted. The face and parts of the hair, however, show considerable areas of repaired damage. The repairing was carried out in New York shortly before 1939, that is after Fried-

länder had seen it but before Valentiner did. It was done with consummate skill and great integrity. The restorer simply repaired; he did not attempt to repaint or "restore" or to fake up what was no longer there.

In short, we have here an undoubted Memling that is damaged but not falsified, and with its exquisite landscape background in its original condition. It was a wise and courageous purchase, even though it taxed our slender resources to the utmost.

The second of these two acquisitions is a village scene by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, which bears the bizarre title *The Sacrifice of Isaac*. This has been generously presented by members of the Maxwell family of Montreal, in memory of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Maxwell.

The painting, which is signed "P Bruegh . . .", is in an incredibly perfect state of preservation except for a crack in the panel at lower left. The colours are brilliant and every detail clear and sharp; the entire painting is obviously in its original condition except for the crack and the partial defacement of the signature. Previously, however, it was completely obscured by many layers of old, discoloured varnish and was a uniform dark brown; the panel, moreover, was badly warped. The donors were convinced that the painting was basically in sound condition, otherwise they would never have offered it to the museum. The cleaning was entrusted to John Muhl, of Montreal, and the brilliant result surpassed even his expectations; it certainly surpassed ours.

The scene is a typical Brueghel one, of a village in winter with a good tavern row going on. The title obviously refers to the group in the left foreground, the small boy with the bagpipe being Isaac, followed by a reluctant Abraham. What it meant at the time is now beyond interpretation; nor does it matter. It is a Brueghel, and that suffices.

Dr. Friedländer informs me that the design is unknown to him, but that it goes back to the elder Brueghel. In other words it is a copy or a variant by the son of a now lost painting by Pieter Brueghel the elder.

JOHN STEEGMAN

The Autographic Prints of Harold Town

When Canadian art is presented this summer at the XXVIII Biennale of Venice, the selection to be shown in the room which has been allocated to Canada by the Italian authorities will comprise prints by Harold Town of Toronto, water colours by J. L. Shadbolt of Vancouver and sculpture by Louis Archambault of Montreal. This magazine has carried articles in the past on Shadbolt and Archambault, but many of our readers may not be as familiar with the work of Town. While he is a painter of distinction, it is nevertheless in his prints, so unusual in both execution and intent, that his full powers of expression are found. Being single impressions, each of them is a unique work, to be treasured in the same way as painting by both artist and owner. Town did not turn to his experiments in lithography with any economic or social purpose in mind, that is to say he was not interested in producing prints in quantity editions to meet a popular demand. His reasons were based rather on the aesthetic possibilities involved.

"I find print-making", he says, "a blessed relief from the intensity of painting . . ." and he adds, "an arena for the trial by combat of new ideas."

He has enlarged on this in a statement he recently gave the editors of Canadian Art, the gist of which we present in a brief summary.

"THE most engrossing and exasperating problem in painting", he explains, "is the multitudinous opportunity it offers for direct creative improvisation in each and every mani-

pulation of the surface of the picture at any time during its creation". He adds that, whether the artist clearly understands what he wants in his finished painting or has only a dim intuition of this, he always must consciously or subconsciously reassess what he is doing while he is working on the picture surface.

"This being so", Town hence reasons, "the original creative purpose becomes as laminated as the surface of the picture, convoluting further the already intricate empathy of hand, eye, spirit and will, and bringing into being the time factor, which means memory of what was on the surface of a picture, what is on the surface, and what was and is intended to be the picture."

This machinery of metamorphosis can involve the painter in a tortuous struggle.

"How then," asks Town, "can one accomplish the miracle that most creative artists at one time or another instinctively seek? . . . the sudden complete magical revelation in which supreme order and the distilled chaos of experience are united in a whole larger than the sum of its parts? I have been able", he concludes, "partly to realize the magic in print-making."

"Here what work one has done", he explains, "is a thing in itself with a time of its own, and what is created is not really evident as a veritable whole until the paper is removed

HAROLD TOWN. *Centaur Entering a School of Barbizon Forest*. Lithograph
Collection: Donald W. Buchanan



from the stone, screen or plate; then, like magic, the conception of hours, days or minutes past is complete. The result may be hideous or fine but, no matter which, the suspense and drama cannot be removed."

Print-making has thus, in a sense, become a separate world of creation to him. This extends even to place and time. He does not do his prints in the studio where he paints. Instead he walks from Wellesley Street in Toronto to another building about a mile distant, near the gates of Victoria College on St. Mary Street, where he has a second workshop.

A wealth of original experiment has gone into the techniques he has developed in his basement printing room. The variety of means he employs is, at times, extraordinary. In some of the prints, the ordinary lithographic process is transformed by the addition of personal elements. "These", he writes, "incorporate both hand pressure and mechanical aids (combs, burlap, thread, wire, etc.)", together with the use of "stencils, templates, screens, resists (rubber cement or wax) adulterated inks and collage. . . ."

"All my prints are based upon actual experience, childhood memories, or historical re-creations. They can never be rightly called non-objective, a term which to me is meaningless. I try also to delineate psychological experience within given situations. I have been greatly influenced by Japanese prints and films, and by colour films generally, such as *Henry V*. Some prints have their origins in my ambivalent reactions to paintings."

One such example is *Centaur Entering a School of Barbizon Forest*. The origin of this came "from my dislike of a picture by Bouguereau" but then "I discovered the essentially comic nature of this same picture, and so I went on to create in my print an abstract parody of a centaur 'tippy toe-ing' into a forest which had somehow become all 'robber-and-sprite' green like a Courbet, whose work I admire."

HAROLD TOWN

*Above: Monument to
Hattusil the Second. Lithograph*

*Below: The Aura of
Yang-Kuei-Fei. Lithograph*





PAUL-EMILE BORDUAS

*Retour d'anciens
signes emprisonnés*

*Shown in the exhibition
"Canadian Abstract Paintings"*

Canadian Abstract Painting Goes on Tour

JEAN-RENÉ OSTIGUY

The first comprehensive collection of Canadian abstract painting ever to be exhibited was brought together this summer by Jean Ostiguy of the National Gallery of Canada. It was shown at the National Gallery during June and from it a selection of works was made, on the request of the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, for circulation in the United States. About a dozen galleries and museums in that country will be presenting this exhibition during the coming year. The quality of most of the paintings proved that many of our best artists are now firmly enrolled in the ranks of the abstractionists. There is, however, no Canadian school of non-representational art. There is no one movement here, but a number of diverse tendencies ranging all the way from the automatism of Borduas to the almost geometrical precision of Fernand Leduc's latest works.

About twenty-five artists are represented in the collection, and even before this tour was arranged a number of them had already received recognition in the United States. For example, the Museum of Modern Art in New York now owns paintings by both Borduas and Riopelle, and works by William Ronald and Harold Town from Toronto were well received by the critics at the time of the American Abstract Artists 20th Annual Exhibition in New York this spring.

A NUMBER of artists in our country devote themselves entirely to non-representational painting in the belief that they have found therein a new form of expression to which they will be able to give their whole lives as painters. Borduas believes we are in a new era where painting initiates a conscious search of the inner world. Our time, he says, is quite as young in the expression of the inner world

as was the age of the cave man in the expression of the external world. Without committing themselves to like predictions, many others among our artists are nevertheless working as if no return to representation could take place in their painting.

Does this abstract painting initiate a new form of art? We cannot say. It is certainly necessary to those who practise it; and if

some were to maintain that it leads to a dead end, it will always be true that abstract painting has produced masterly achievements and allowed many artists to advance along the path of self-understanding. Without the advent of Borduas, Riopelle, Binning, Town, Ronald and a few others of similar tendencies it would have been impossible for a critic to apply this sentence to Canadian painting: "Everything happens here as if painting had been invented in the twentieth century."

The work of several artists represented in this exhibition has been non-representational for the past six years or so. On the other hand, Borduas, Riopelle and Leduc produced their first non-representational paintings respectively in 1942, 1944 and 1942.

The appearance of non-representation in Canadian painting might be dated from 1942. Of course, certain artists attempted sporadic experiments of this nature before that date; but nothing was produced to compare to Borduas' gouaches of 1942. This artist then initiated in our country a style of painting which, in spite of its non-representation of the external world, was of a high order, a style which borrowed nothing ephemeral from either publicity or decoration. By a miracle, nature was still present in the painting, as in all the great works of the past. The gouaches of Borduas did not disown tradition; they renewed it. To understand the prolific growth of abstract painting in Montreal between the years

1942 and 1954, we must take into account the activity of Borduas as a teacher. Mousseau and Riopelle studied with him in Montreal. Leduc, Gauvreau and many others sought his advice and benefited from the new horizons he revealed to his pupils. In that sense, we may speak of a Montreal school as one speaks of a Pacific school in the United States. More than that, Montreal had for several years a group of painters called "Les Automatistes".

On a national scale, and with particular emphasis in Toronto, another trend towards non-representation developed about the year 1950, this time under the influence of the United States and especially of New York. This second wave of interest in abstract painting resulted in the formation in Toronto of the "Painters Eleven" group, in which abstraction predominates. This group have recently exhibited 22 paintings at the 20th Annual Exhibition of the American Abstract Artists held in the Riverside Museum, New York. Several of this "Painters Eleven" group are represented in this collection.

Painters in western Canada also have begun to show an interest in abstraction although there has been no group movement there. But abstract influences are being rapidly assimilated by each artist who has subjected himself honestly to them. However, Takao Tanabe and Gordon Smith are the only truly non-representational painters from western Canada to be included in this exhibition.

J. W. G. MACDONALD

*Riviera Winter
Colour Symphony*

*Shown in the exhibition
"Canadian Artists Abroad"*



The Masks of the Longhouse Iroquois

E. S. COATSWORTH

CARVINGS by Canadian Indians are thought of by most people as limited to the totem poles of British Columbia Indians. Yet a distinctive form of wood carving is still carried on in eastern Canada, among those Indians of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy who retain their traditional beliefs and practices.

This is the carving of wooden false faces or curing masks for the use of members of the secret medicine or "false-face" societies which flourish wherever the Longhouse or non-Christian Iroquois have settled. The practice has disappeared entirely in Christian Iroquois communities, since the masks, functionally, are intimately associated with the old religion. This relationship will be appreciated immediately by anyone who has seen the documentary film, *The People of the Longhouse*, produced by the National Film Board.

In the years which followed the Second World War there was reason to fear that mask carving, as a living craft, had died out. The followers of the old religion had not decreased, if anything they have held their own or even increased somewhat in numbers, but fewer younger Indians could be interested in taking up the traditional crafts by which the older generation had supplemented its income.

In the course of a number of intermittent visits to the Six Nations Indian Reserve, which lies between Brantford and Caledonia in agricultural southern Ontario, I made numerous enquiries to see if I could commission a mask maker to carve a representative replica of a mask for me. The replies were negative and I assumed at first that there was a religious reluctance to discuss the matter. I soon discovered, however, that many of the Indians believed that there was simply no one left with any competent mastery of the art.

In the end, I came upon a mask carver by accident. A middle-aged Longhouse Indian referred me to a friend, a man in his early thirties, whom the older man had been exhorting to master, and thereby preserve, as many

of the ancient crafts of the Iroquois as he could. So, I drove along the dusty clay and gravel concession road and made the acquaintance of Jacob Thomas.

His frame two-storeyed house lies well back from the road and, except for a small barn-like out-building and a few shade trees, stands by itself in a big field. Thomas is an active farmer and a regular participant in the religious and socio-political ceremonies which take place in the Onondaga Longhouse about half a mile away, one of the four centres and places of worship of the non-Christian Iroquois who live on this reserve.

At first we discussed basketry, at which both Thomas and his wife are adept. They worked chiefly with black ash splints, using hickory wherever handles were necessary, and the quality of the weaving, and the variety of basket types and designs which they executed were impressive. It was not until later that Thomas asked if I would be interested in buying a mask replica.

When the weather is fair, Thomas works out of doors, using an apparatus which resembles a saw-horse but fitted with an adjustable clamp at one end operated by the feet of the carver as he sits on the saw-horse. When the weather forces him indoors, he works either on the saw-horse or at a work bench inside his workshop. His tools are at hand: saw, axe, mallet, draw knife, clasp-knife, whetstone and a number of gouge-shaped chisels which he had fashioned himself from large spikes. In a dry corner he keeps his raw material, half sections of basswood, which he has chopped and sawn himself.

What do the masks look like? They are either exaggerated or grotesquely distorted representations of faces. They are made to fit over the human visage and are therefore somewhat standardized in size. They are, generally speaking, characterized by deep-set eyes, also by protruding foreheads which are occasionally smooth but more often deeply wrinkled or

*An Iroquois from the
Six Nations Reserve
wearing a carved
"false face" and rattling
a magic rattle in a
sacred tobacco patch.*



*An Iroquois corn-husk
mask from the
Six Nations Reserve.*

furrowed; prominent noses, sometimes awry; exaggerated lips, either flared, distended, or crooked; and chins which are also pronounced. Behind, the masks are well hollowed for ease in fitting over the human face. Masks which are used for curing rituals will have a small sack containing three lumps of uncured native tobacco hanging down into the hollow at the rear, and such masks will be completed with a thick braid of horsehair fastened at the top and falling down on either side of the face.

There is some doubt as to whether masks were used by the Iroquois Confederacy in prehistoric times. On the other hand, French missionaries and explorers who during the first half of the seventeenth century in what is now Simcoe County, Ontario, visited or worked among the Hurons, who were of the Iroquoian linguistic stock, made numerous references to wooden masks, crudely carved, which the Hurons used to ward off disease and spirits of evil.

When the Iroquois Confederacy conquered and dispersed the Hurons in 1648-50, they brought back with them a great number of Huron captives, many of whom they adopted, as was their custom. There is good reason to believe, considering the underlying cultural and linguistic affinities between the Hurons and their captors, that some Huron customs were preserved to become part of the heritage of the Iroquois, and that the art of mask carving, along with the religious practices associated with it, may have come to the Iroquois in this way.

A mask carved by Jacob Thomas of the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario



At the conclusion of the American Revolution many Iroquois found themselves homeless, as a result of allying themselves with the British cause. They moved north of Lake Ontario, and there the fires of the Confederacy were rekindled on the banks of the Grand River. On this reserve, all tribes of the Confederacy are represented, Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas and Tuscaroras. Unlike those on other Iroquois reserves, which were settled by smaller groups usually from one tribe, the Iroquois on the Grand River have preserved much of their Iroquois identity, particularly those of the Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca tribes, from which the Longhouses draw most of their strength.

Ritually, the masks are associated with the secret medicine or "false-face" societies among the Longhouse Iroquois. The societies conduct public rituals in the Longhouses at stated intervals during the year in order to drive away diseases, pestilence and high winds. They are also called upon to cure illnesses of believers in their homes, and whenever they forgather, publicly or privately, the members wear their false-face masks for the curing rites.

The masks actually represent spirits, either "The Great Doctor Spirit" or a host of minor spirits, referred to as "the common false faces of the forest" or the "flying heads". These lesser spirits are occasionally seen by hunters in the depths of the woods, but "The Great Doctor" is seldom if ever seen by human eyes. Shortly after the creation of the world, he challenged the Creator as ruler of the earth, but in a contest of power was defeated, and banished by the Creator to the "great rocky rim of the world". The Creator, however, recognized the powers of "The Great Doctor" and assigned him the task of traversing the earth each day, driving away all pestilence, disease and high winds which might be troubling the Iroquois peoples. The face of "The Great Doctor" is awry as a result of his contest with the Creator, and masks made in his likeness preserve this characteristic. His journey around the edge of the world also influences the colouring of masks: if painted in the morning they are painted red, for then his face is reddened by the rays of the sun; but if painted in the afternoon they are painted black, for during that part of the day, when he looks back over the path he has followed, his face is darkened by shadows.

Curing masks must be carved from the living tree, and the tree must heal over completely before the mask gains its full power. Then the curing power is confirmed by a special tobacco ritual. Great care must be taken of the masks:

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Chevalier A. S. FALARDEAU

Born 1823 in Cap-Santé, Quebec
died in Florence 1889

"The Harbour at Sunset"

After Claude Lorrain, painted in 1863

William Colgate in his book Canadian Art, 1820-1940 writes: "England is said to have offered two million francs (about 380,000 dollars) for one of his paintings during his lifetime".



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they must be handled and spoken to reverently, and the tobacco ritual repeated at stated intervals.

It is doubtful whether there are more than a handful of competent mask carvers practising the art today in all the Iroquois communities in the state of New York and in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Fortunately for the faithful, Jacob Thomas showed an early aptitude as a whittler, and was raised in the Longhouse tradition. Although born into the Snipe clan in the Cayuga tribe, he was raised as an Onondaga, and came to absorb his cultural heritage from the ritualists and leaders of the Onondaga Longhouse.

At the age of eleven he carved his first mask, just to see if he could do it. His skill with a knife did not go unnoticed, and when he was in his mid-teens he was approached by an elder and requested to carve a real mask for a member of one of the societies. His work was approved, and requests for other masks came to him from time to time.

In his twenties, Thomas left the reserve to try his luck in the city as he felt the pull of industry as do so many present-day Iroquois youths. But Toronto was not to his liking and he returned

home to farm. He married and now has a large family. The feeding of many small mouths has provided an incentive to make handicrafts for commercial sale, and here his wife, an equally adept handicraft worker, assists him industriously. Though they both derive income from basketry, Doris Thomas's specialty is making dolls, which are made on a base of tightly twisted corn husks and clothed, in traditional Iroquois dress, in deerskin decorated with beadwork patterns.

About six years ago Thomas first realized that there was an interest on the part of white collectors, ethnologists and those whose interests run to the bizarre, in authentic replicas of the curing masks or false faces. The replicas, of course, do not include the tobacco sacks or the horsehair, and so there are no rituals surrounding their carving. They are "secularized" to this extent, but yet are carved exactly as are the curing masks. The individual variations in design attest to the skill of the carver, the vividness of his imagination, and his unconscious absorption of his own religious traditions. There is variety in the facial forms and in the details of design, but all fit into the culturally prescribed pattern.



Coast to Coast in Art

HARLEY PARKER

Tent Caterpillars

Lino and monotype

Sculpture in an Outdoor Exhibition

An outdoor exhibition of sculpture will be mounted on the lawn in front of the library building of the University of British Columbia this summer. July 5 is the opening date, and the display will consist of some thirty works by British Columbia sculptors. Also the Russian-American sculptor, Archipenko, will be present on the campus at that time, as he is one of the lecturers in the Summer School of the Arts being held there from July 3 to August 18.

Grants for the Arts in British Columbia

The arts in British Columbia have received considerable assistance this year in grants from the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation. This foundation, which was established last year by means of a million dollar gift from Mr. and Mrs. Leon Koerner of Vancouver, intends to stimulate a wide variety of new activities for cultural purposes and in public health and welfare.

Its recent grants in the visual arts are: Vancouver Community Arts Council, \$3,000 for the extension of the "Artists in Schools Program" and the promotion of British Columbia crafts; British Columbia Potters Guild, \$500 for research upon stonework and clay deposits in British Columbia for ceramic purposes; Vancouver Art Gallery, \$3,000 to expand the exhibition programme of the Gallery; Vancouver School of Art, \$2,000 for travelling scholarships for graduate art students to continue their study;

University of British Columbia, \$2,000 toward the establishment of a Department of Fine Arts, and \$1,000 for scholarships in the fine arts during the summer session.

There were also grants in the fields of archaeology, music, the theatre and one for a historical museum.

Canadian Art for the Brussels International and Universal Exhibition

For once Canada is to be thoroughly and thoughtfully represented in a great world's fair. At the last of these international spectacles, the New York World's Fair of 1939, we did not make too good a showing. But for the International and Universal Exhibition scheduled for 1958 in Brussels, Belgium, Canada has already completed its plan for a modern pavilion which will house a comprehensive collection of exhibits descriptive of our life and culture.

An art gallery is to be included in the building as well as a section devoted to fine crafts. A committee composed of several Canadian curators and art critics was appointed by the government to decide on the scope of the exhibition to be presented in this small gallery. Its decision, as now announced, is that, in keeping with the contemporary character of the pavilion as a whole, the Canadian art to be shown shall "be limited to the work of those living artists who have made their impact in Canada during the post-war period".

Upon completion of balloting by members of the committee, it was agreed that the work of the following painters, sculptors and print-makers should be shown there from April to October 1958: Paul-Emile Borduas, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Jacques de Tonnancour, Harold Town, J. L. Shadbolt, Goodridge Roberts, Louis Archambault, Jean Dallaire, Ann Kahane, Kenneth Lochhead, Jack Nichols, Alfred Pelland, Léon Bellefleur, B. C. Binning, Bruno Bobak, Albert Dumouchel, William Ronald, Joe Plaskett, Gentile Tondino, Jean-Paul Mousseau and Alexander Colville.

Art Centre for Kitchener and Waterloo

Canada's newest art centre is being opened in the twin cities of Kitchener and Waterloo. The Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery association was formed this winter with the object of bringing a regular series of art exhibitions to the community. The membership drive has been successful and temporary accommodation has been found in a small one-storey building, formerly used for high-school classrooms, adjacent to the Collegiate Institute. A full series of exhibitions has been booked for the coming season, beginning in September. The membership chairman is Mrs. W. H. Sims, P.O. Box 203, Kitchener.

Arts and Crafts of the Pacific Coast Indians in a Comprehensive Display

Recently shown in Vancouver, the exhibition, "People of the Potlach", was designed to give an authentic and complete survey of the culture and art of the Indian people of the Pacific Coast. It drew a larger attendance than any previous exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Most

of the material came from the Provincial Museum in Victoria and the Anthropology Museum of the University of British Columbia, both of which have outstanding collections but inadequate display space and facilities. Additional items came from the Portland Museum, Oregon, the Washington State Museum and private collections.

In the main exhibition gallery, the way of life of these Indians was shown by a display of objects according to their use, fishing, household, ceremonial and so forth. In a second room, objects were selected for their fine artistic quality and arranged according to materials such as copper, stone, wood, bark, horn. In a third setting drama was added by having tiny spotlights pick out masks on the walls of an otherwise totally darkened room.

Too many people on the West Coast are only familiar with the more obvious Indian art forms, the totem poles and the masks, and these often only in debased commercial versions. This exhibition showed the extraordinary extent to which the art impulse had penetrated all phases of the life of these Indians and showed it with a vividness sometimes lacking in anthropological displays.

Archambault Designs Trophy for Critics' Circle

The 1956 trophy of the Critics' Circle of Montreal has been awarded to Miss Maureen Forrester, the contralto who has brought distinction to her city in concerts in Europe as well as Canada and the United States. Designed by Louis Archambault, it was executed by the silversmith, Georges Delrue. It consists of three loops of brass knotted together by a tiger's eye.

JAMES BOYD

Autumn. Etching

This print and the one reproduced opposite by Harley Parker are included in the 1956 exhibition of the Canadian Society of Graphic Arts. The newspaper, The Telegram, of Toronto purchased all the works that were for sale in the exhibition and it is now generously allowing a selection to go on a tour of the Maritime art circuit under the auspices of the National Gallery of Canada.



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OPEN COMPETITION

Lakeview United Church is holding a competition for a mural painting for the Chapel. Mural 29' x 10'. Value of commission \$1500 plus cost of materials and installation. Sketches to scale in water color, oil or casein will be accepted by the selection committee until November 15, 1956.

Further information from Rev. J. R. Hord, Lakeview United, Regina, Sask.

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Peter Haworth Most Popular

Of the 11,300 who visited the Spring Exhibition of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts—a drop of 1,200 from the year before—533 voted on their favourite pictures. The most popular was *Mist on the Lake*, by Peter Haworth, winner of the Jessie Dow Prize for water colour. It received 120 votes. The most popular oil was *Genesis* by Adrian Dingle of Erindale, Ontario, with 95 votes.

Montreal Museum Attendance Drops

The 93rd annual report of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts records an attendance last year of 77,403, as compared with 93,380 the year before, a decrease of 15,977. The membership increased by 203 to 2,039, "far too low," said the President, F. Cleveland Morgan, "for a city of metropolitan status." While the year's income increased by \$6,340, expenses also increased, and the deficit was \$34,242. It was \$31,311 in the previous year. At the end of the year, only \$290,000 of the \$1,000,000 objective in the Museum's special campaign for funds had been raised.

Learned Societies See Arts of Quebec

During the meetings of the learned societies and the Canadian Arts Council in Montreal in June, the delegates had an opportunity to see a cross-section of the contemporary painting and sculpture of Montreal. The parks department of the city of Montreal presented 78 works by 41 living painters in the Helène de Champlain restaurant on St. Helen's Island and 25 pieces by a score of sculptors in an outdoor exhibition within the barracks walls on the same island site. Every current phase of painting was represented, from amateur and academic to automatist, and it was on the whole a lively display, though it would have been better if several well-known painters unaccountably missing had been included in place of some of the less important. The sculpture section, organized by Louis Archambault, was a revelation of the present vitality of this art and Montrealers are hoping that the outdoor exhibition will be an annual event. A better place might be found, however. The pieces seemed lost in the vast space and the colossal span of the Jacques Cartier bridge dwarfed even Archambault's twelve-foot high *Iron Bird*.

At a meeting of the Humanities Association held in the midst of the painting exhibition, Jacques de Tonnancour spoke on the contemporary idiom in painting in Quebec and Robert Ayre gave a paper on the older traditions.



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NEW BOOKS ON THE ARTS

THE TASTE OF OUR TIME. EL GRECO. By Paul Guinard. 143 pp.; 53 colour plates. VENICE. By Mario Brunetti, Terisio Pignatti, Rodolfo Pallucchini, Jacques Lassaigne. 153 pp.; 78 colour plates. New York. Skira Inc. \$5.75 each. (Recent additions to this series of art books edited by Albert Skira.)

These two recent volumes in the series *The Taste of Our Time* are quite different in approach. The one on El Greco is studiously biographical. It provides an attempt at a synthesis of all the conclusions reached by the many varied and often conflicting authorities who have written about the great Cretan painter. El Greco went from Greece by way of Venice to distant Toledo in Spain to create there the great masterpieces which make him a unique figure in the history of western art. The volume on Venice is more discursive in content, yet at the same time it is, in its own way, illuminating and stimulating. It brings alive the historical personality of Venice by its story of the impact of Venetian life and architecture upon artists of every age.

The volumes are both well written and both, of course, as is usual with Skira publications, have a wealth of colour plates.

Venice, one notes here, has and does continue to attract Canadian painters. At the turn of the century, James Wilson Morrice spent many seasons there, although he is not referred to in this book, yet two artists, Sickert and Whistler, with both of whom he had much in common in his approach to Venice, are mentioned. In more recent years, Roloff Beny, Joe Plaskett and Takao Tanabe have all equally felt the spell of the city of the lagoons.

The publishers have paid due recognition to the greatness of the Canaletto paintings of Venice in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada by reproducing one of them, *The Vegetable Market*, in colour and by adding, also in colour, a reproduction of a detail from the same painting. Unfortunately, despite the quality usually associated with the production of these books, these two plates are inaccurate; the colours of the original painting have been distorted.

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PEOPLE OF THE POTLACH. By Audrey Hawthorn. 47 pp.; 109 pl. Vancouver: The Vancouver Art Gallery. \$1.00.

This is an adequate and complete guide to the exhibition recently held in Vancouver. In it, the author has taken the wise course of treating the various West Coast tribes as a cultural whole rather than splitting them up into units whose distinguishing characteristics are important only to the specialist, not to the layman, and it is in the ranks of the latter that most of the readers of this booklet will be found. . . . It can not help but give one a better understanding of this most interesting group of Canadian Indians.

The illustrations, over a hundred of them, are well selected to show typical specimens from the exhibition. The printing process employed, unfortunately, has not succeeded well, for the shadows have clogged up badly in many cases, in plate number 75 for example, with a resulting lack of crispness and definition.

DOUGLAS LEECHMAN

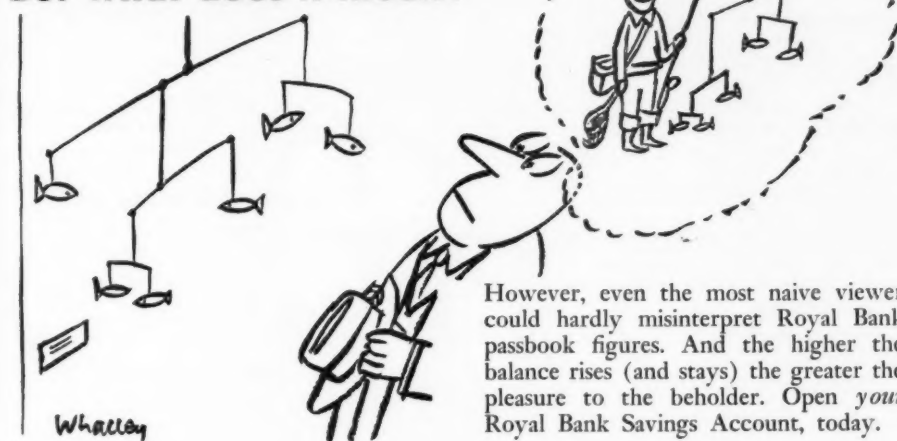
FROM FRESCO TO PLASTICS. By José Gutierrez. 89 pp. Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada. \$1.00.

The sub-title for this book, "New Materials for Easel and Mural Painting", more aptly describes the contents than does its title. While approximately half of its 89 pages deal with fresco painting, the real value of this book is in the half dealing with plastics. In fact, as far as I know, this is the first material ever to have been published on the use of silicon, pyroxylin, vinyl-acetate and vinyl-chloride as fine-art media. (Gutierrez was brought to Canada last autumn from Mexico to give demonstrations to Canadian artists on the use of these media, under the auspices of the National Gallery of Canada.)

The author deals with each plastic substance individually, outlining its basic ingredients and characteristics. He describes in detail the preparation of grounds, gives formulae for media and describes the general atmospheric conditions suitable to each. Because José Gutierrez has conducted most of his experiments in Mexico, some of the instructions may require certain changes in detail in order to be applicable to Canada. For instance, the best grade of denatured alcohol available in Canada contains too many impurities to use in silicon, without breaking down the formula. Also, some trade names are different, for example "Vinylite Crystals", or their nearest counterpart, are called "V.15" in Canada. The user should be prepared to encounter a few variations of this kind. However, this book contains sufficient information to serve as a complete technical guide to the artist with no previous knowledge of the various synthetic plastic media used in painting.

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AN EXHIBITION — CANADIAN ARTISTS ABROAD

Continued from page 323

revolutionized and revitalized my thinking and my work. I cannot say with any clarity what has influenced my work. One thing is that travel abroad keeps the artistic fires going. To be sent on a scholarship not only gives the student a sense of pride, and well-being, a boost to his ego, but it takes away the Damoclean worries of finance that often mar his work at home. Again, often it sets his perturbations of inferiority at rest. He finds, often, not what wonders are being performed in the art centres of the world but what banalities one may often find there. Then there is truth in Chesterton's remark: 'The best way to appreciate your own country is to leave it.'

One general opinion seems to be shared by most of the artists, that present day Canadian painting is comparable in quality and interest with that being done in other countries. "I am quite convinced," states J. W. G. MacDonald, "that creative painting in Canada is as equally advanced as anything which can

be seen in any other country. I thought so before going abroad. Now I know."

To be confident and proud of our achievement is quite proper, though to be insular or self-satisfied would be limiting and dangerous. The artist's creative impulses are fed from without as well as from within. There are benefits to be reaped from a year abroad in which to paint or study in new surroundings, in which to free one's self for awhile from the familiar routines of the school or the studio, the circle of friends and fellow-artists, and to find one's self in a fresh and stimulating milieu with time to reassess one's work and reconsider one's ideas.

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